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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 002650

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CG](#) [UG](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN/UGANDA/CONGO: LRA PEACE TALKS RECESS,
COMBATANTS FAIL TO RETURN TO ASSEMBLY AREAS

REF: KHARTOUM 02609

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Peace talks between the Government of Uganda (GOU) and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) recessed November 8 after the parties failed to reach agreement on a lengthy protocol addressing "root causes" of the 20-year LRA insurgency. LRA combatants missed a November 8 deadline for assembly on the Sudan/Uganda border, but the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) also failed to withdraw from areas near the designated assembly point. UN Under Secretary General Jan Egeland is apparently ready to meet LRA chief Joseph Kony at the Sudan-DRC border if the LRA agrees to release a number of women and children to his custody. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is attempting to quell LRA-style attacks south and east of Juba, and believes the Ugandan rebel group is not responsible for the most recent incidents.
End Summary.

Talks Recess

¶2. (C) Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar, mediating the GOU-LRA talks, has been pushing hard for an agreement on ways to address the "root causes" of the LRA conflict since the renewal of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on November 1. LRA delegates, according to several sources at the talks, balked at reaching a final accord on "root causes," and sought time to consult with Joseph Kony and other LRA leaders at Ri-Kwangba on the Sudan-DRC border. GOU negotiators, who had firmly rebuffed the LRA delegation's request to consult in northern Uganda, acquiesced in the proposal for a recess that would allow the LRA negotiators to meet with Kony. The GOU delegation departed Juba on November 8, and LRA delegates prepared to travel to Ri-Kwangba and meet with their leadership. The GOU delegation has expressed growing frustration with the talks and the LRA delegation's apparent lack of authority or willingness to resolve key issues. It is not clear when talks will resume.

¶3. (C) GoSS and GOU negotiators presented a draft to the LRA earlier this week that attempted to limit the areas open for further discussion during this phase of the peace talks. A UN official attached to the mediation team told us the remaining areas of dispute are: (1) transitional security arrangements; (2) the establishment of a ministry for northern Uganda; (3) the introduction of some form of federalism to Uganda; and (4) a request for compensation by the GOU for cattle stolen from ethnic Acholi in northern Uganda in 1986. The official said a recess is good idea in principle, but warned that there is a significant danger that the LRA will seek to introduce new issues when talks resume.

¶4. (C) SPLA Maj. Gen. Wilson Deng, who commands the forces providing security and food to the LRA at the Owiny-Kibul assembly point, told ConGen staff on November 9 that the LRA had not yet assembled there. LRA forces east of the Nile were required to gather at Owiny-Kibul, on the Sudan-Uganda border, by November 8 under the renewed Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. However, Deng said, Ugandan forces had also not yet withdrawn from locations near Owiny-Kibul, as required under the agreement. He said he expected the UPDF to withdraw "soon." In any case, Deng said, the UPDF only has a "platoon plus" at Palataka and a "platoon" at Tabika.

¶5. (C) During negotiations to renew the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, GoSS VP Machar had pressed for a complete Ugandan withdrawal from points east of the Juba-Nimule road, which runs north and south along the east bank of the Nile. In the end negotiators agreed less precisely that "the GoSS shall ensure security in the general area east of Nimule)Juba road to the satisfaction of the parties."

¶6. (C) There remains considerable confusion over where Ugandan forces are deployed east of the Nile, and which forces will be withdrawn. Prior to their departure, sources on the Ugandan delegation confirmed that their forces would withdraw from Palataka and Tabika. One UPDF officer said they were not required to withdraw from other locations east of the Nile, citing specifically a UPDF detachment at Parajok. Gen. Deng said there is no such detachment. The UPDF, he claims, are deployed at Nisitu and Aru Junction --

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locations nearer to Juba -- and would remain there for the time being.

¶7. (C) Deng had no direct comment on allegations in the media that the SPLA had again supplied food to the LRA at locations outside the agreed assembly points on November 3. Deng had previously admitted providing food to the LRA outside the assembly area during October. Deng also confirmed that a small group of LRA arrived in Owiny-Kibul on November 8 and requested food which they could take back with them to their camp. Deng said he instructed the local commander to deny the request, noting that removal of food from the assembly area is a violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.

Egeland to Meet Kony?

¶8. (C) Meanwhile, UN USG for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland has informed the LRA that he is prepared to meet LRA chief Joseph Kony at Ri-Kwangba on November 12, according to a UN source in Juba. Accounts differ over whether the LRA or Egeland first proposed the meeting. Egeland has asked that the LRA release an unspecified number of women and children to his custody during the meeting, according to the UN official, and will not meet with Kony unless Kony accepts this condition. LRA second-in-command Vincent Otti objected strenuously to this request, according to a UN official who spoke to him directly by telephone. According to the official, Otti said "you want to separate us (from the women and children) so the UN can bomb us." It is unclear whether the meeting will take place. Despite this uncertainty, Machar and the GOSS were making detailed plans to transport Egeland, the mediation team, the LRA delegates, and several observers to Ri-Kwangba.

¶9. (C) Included in the observer delegation is Jongomoyi Okidi-Olal, a U.S. citizen of Ugandan origin. Okidi-Olal has attended the last several sessions of the peace talks as an observer, at Machar's invitation. Officials from both the

GOU and the GOSS have separately questioned ConGen staff about Okidi-Olal's relationship with the U.S. Government. Okidi-Olal has distributed several business cards to participants in the negotiations labeled "U.S. Department of the Army." The cards bear the seals of the United States and the US Department of the Army, and include Okidi-Olal's U.S. military address (jongomoyi.okidiolala@us.army.mil). ConGen staff, who have not met Okidi-Olal, believe his activities significantly compromise the credibility of both State Department and DOD staff operating in Juba.

SPLA Moves Against Insecurity

110. (C) There has been a respite in the insecurity that has gripped areas east and south of Juba since mid-October. The LRA-style attacks have killed 70-100 people, according to senior SPLA officers. The last known incident occurred November 2-3 between Magari and Birinyang (aka Bilinyang) on the road between Juba and Mongalla. Seven people reportedly died in the incident, the latest of several attacks on public transport buses. Though many of the attacks are consistent with LRA tactics, SPLA officials increasingly believe that the LRA are not responsible for most of the recent incidents. Though they acknowledge that LRA elements have played some role, they lay most blame on other armed groups -- notably "remnants" of the Equatoria Defence Force militia -- and alleged backers in the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF). SPLA General Deng told ConGen staff November 9 that the SPLA had arrested the "commander" of the group that carried out the latest attack, and that this person is "not LRA." Deng claimed that a brigade of SPLA forces is now fully deployed to secure transportation routes north, east and south of Juba. The movement of people and goods along these routes nevertheless remains severely restricted.

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